This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

(a) a memory within which is resident a plurality of intelligent agents and distribution control information associated with each intelligent agent that defines distribution rights for such intelligent agent, wherein each intelligent agent is configured to execute within at least one agent runtime, wherein each agent runtime executes in an operating system environment, wherein each intelligent agent has a degree of autonomy delegated thereto, wherein at least one intelligent agent is a mobile intelligent agent capable of being distributed to a remote agent runtime resident in another computer, and wherein distribution control information associated with the mobile intelligent agent permits distribution of the mobile intelligent agent to the remote agent runtime; and

(b) program code configured to control distribution of an the mobile intelligent agent to the remote agent runtime in response to a request to access such mobile intelligent agent based upon the distribution control information associated with such mobile intelligent agent.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the program code is further configured to set distribution control information for an intelligent agent in connection with publishing the intelligent agent.

3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the distribution control information is disposed in a header for each intelligent agent.

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the distribution control information defines a publishing level that prohibits distribution of an intelligent agent to another computer.

5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the distribution control information defines a publishing level that permits distribution of an intelligent agent to another computer only in response to authorization from product support personnel.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the plurality of intelligent agents are each configured to perform product support operations in connection with supporting a computer-related product, and wherein the distribution control information identifies a first intelligent agent as an internal agent configured to execute on a product support computer, and a second intelligent agent as an external agent configured to execute on a customer computer configured to utilize the computer-related product.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the distribution control information further identifies a third intelligent agent as a base agent associated with a particular release of the computer-related product.

8. (Currently Amended) A method of controlling distribution of an intelligent agent, the method comprising:

(a) maintaining in a computer readable memory distribution control information that defines distribution rights to each of a plurality of intelligent agents, wherein the plurality of intelligent agents each have a degree of autonomy delegated thereto, wherein the plurality of intelligent agents are each configured to perform product support operations in connection with supporting a computer-related product, and wherein the distribution control information identifies a first intelligent agent as an internal agent configured to execute on a product support computer, and a second intelligent agent as an external agent configured to execute on a customer computer configured to utilize the computer-related product; and

(b) controlling distribution of an intelligent agent among the plurality of intelligent agents in response to a request to access such intelligent agent based

upon the distribution control information associated with such intelligent agent, including prohibiting distribution of the first intelligent agent to the customer computer based upon the distribution control information associated therewith and permitting distribution of the second intelligent agent to the customer computer based upon the distribution control information associated therewith.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, further comprising setting distribution control information for an intelligent agent in connection with publishing the intelligent agent.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the distribution control information is disposed in a header for each intelligent agent.

11. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the distribution control information defines a publishing level that prohibits distribution of an intelligent agent to another computer.

12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the distribution control information defines a publishing level that permits distribution of an intelligent agent to another computer only in response to authorization from product support personnel.

13. (Canceled).

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 8 ~~13~~, wherein the distribution control information further identifies a third intelligent agent as a base agent associated with a particular release of the computer-related product.

15. (Currently Amended) A program product, comprising:

(a) an intelligent agent <u>configured for use in performing a product support operation in connection with supporting a computer-related product, wherein the intelligent agent has a degree of autonomy delegated thereto</u>;

(b) a header associated with the intelligent agent, the header including distribution control information that defines distribution rights to the intelligent agent<u>, the distribution control information identifying a publishing level selected from among a first publishing level that characterizes the intelligent agent as an internal agent configured to execute on a product support computer, and a second publishing level that characterizes the intelligent agent as an external agent configured to execute on a customer computer configured to utilize the computer-related product, wherein the first publishing level prohibits distribution of the intelligent agent to a customer computer and the second publishing level permits distribution of the intelligent agent to a customer computer</u>; and

(c) a <u>tangible computer readable</u> ~~signal-bearing~~ medium bearing the header and the intelligent agent.

16. (Original) The program product of claim 15, wherein the header is defined in a markup language.

17. (Original) The program product of claim 16, wherein the header is defined in XML.

18. (Currently Amended) A program product, comprising:

(a) program code configured to control distribution of ~~an intelligent agent~~ <u>a plurality of intelligent agents, wherein each intelligent agent is configured to execute within at least one agent runtime, wherein each agent runtime executes in an operating system environment, wherein each intelligent agent has a degree of autonomy delegated thereto, wherein at least one intelligent agent is a mobile</u>

intelligent agent capable of being distributed to a remote agent runtime resident in another computer, and wherein distribution control information associated with the mobile intelligent agent defines a distribution right for the mobile intelligent agent that permits distribution of the mobile intelligent agent to the remote agent runtime, the program code further configured to control distribution of the mobile intelligent agent to the remote agent runtime in response to a request to access such mobile intelligent agent by accessing the distribution control information associated with such mobile intelligent agent, ~~wherein such distribution control information defines distribution rights for such intelligent agent~~; and

(b) a tangible computer readable ~~signal bearing~~ medium bearing the program code.

19. (Canceled).

20. (Currently Amended) The program product ~~code~~ of claim 18, wherein the program code is configured to access the distribution control information for such intelligent agent by accessing a header associated with such intelligent agent, wherein the header is defined in a markup language.

21. (New) The apparatus of claim 6, wherein at least a subset of the plurality of intelligent agents is configured to access a cross-customer knowledge base including information collected from a plurality of customers.

22. (New) The method of claim 8, wherein at least a subset of the plurality of intelligent agents is configured to access a cross-customer knowledge base including information collected from a plurality of customers.